the Pistol's by Seward W. Hopkins.

CHAPTER I.

Is It the Shadow of Tragedy?

the other a young lady, had been given up by their regular physicians.

a sense of pride that these difficult cases had been confided to me, and went at them with all the vigor and hope of youth. I bore upon my shoulders a sense of responsibility that older practitioners learn to set aside. My very youth, and the determination of succeed, made me desperate and bold.

I tried the experiments the older heads had advised against. I spent sleepless nights with pencil and paper producing formula after formula. I spent hours in my laboratory testing rare combinations of drugs, some almost unknown and some not yet acknowledged in the field of medicine by the conservatives of my school.

The result of all this, after weeks of the most unremitting toll, was suc My patients got well, and I fell ill. My own attendant, Dr. Thornton, the kind old physician of my family, imperatively forbade all work.

There's no use, Stagg," he said, as he felt my pulse, looked at my tongue, and shook his gray head sorrowfully. "You've done well for others, you've nearly killed yourself. Neither your physical being nor your mental powers will stand this strain. You've got to give up for a few months and go away to rest."

'Can't I rest here, doctor?" I asked, "here" being the city of New York, "then I can keep an eye on-

The old physician snorted. "Rest here! Yes, you can rest in Woodlawn Cemetery if you want to. I was silly enough to argue from the point of view that you had more or less de-

"Live! Of course, I want to live." He waved his hand as if that settled the matter conclusively without further

"Then," he continued, "if you want to live, there is just one way to do it. must obey orders." I was lying on the sofa in my library. I closed my eyes and reflected.

It was a bitter thing to think of, giving up just when I had begun to hear my name spoken with respect, just as I was learning to know the sweet fame born of success, but what good would all the success, fame, or anything else do me, if I broke down permanently?

present any financial difficulties, for I had inherited a small fortune, was alone in the world, and could easily afford to "What do you want me to do?" I

asked. "Go off on a hunting trip? Start for Europe?"

"Neither!" came the answer rather explosively. "I want you to rest. I know you and your hunting trips, tramping miles a day after a poor innocent deer, or climbing mountains in pursuit of a miserable, worthless bear. And I know your European trips, shooting from London to Paris, then on to e Mediterranean, to Rome-and bosh! Is that resting?"

"I have known you to prescribe both," I said weakly.

"True. You have known me to pre scribe arsenic. Shall I therefore you with some, and kill you? Come, Stagg! don't be a fool. I am going to give you the pleasantest prescription I ever gave anybody."
"Go ahead," I said with a smile.

Something odd, yet something that brings to my mind sweet visions of bucolle pleasures. There is an invigorating tonic in the very air I breathe as I think of it. You have some cousins in Uties, have you not?" "Yes."

Well fixed, keep horses and all that? "Fine country round there for riding;

no excitement, yet not a trackless wil-I went. derness. Fine valley, the Mohawk. My cousin James was a lawyer. His Best farms, best milk, good people. Do you begin to see?" "Then I peremptorily order you to that he adorned it. For two years he

pack up, go to your cousin's, buy or beg had been the district attorney of Oneida horse, and spend your time riding or county. driving around the country." "But wouldn't Westchester County

do? The roads are good, the-" "That's just it. The roads are too Too many people use them. You'll go up to Westchester County, get into golf, and all that tommyrot, and it distance away, on an important case, it the beds of shallow streams. I climbed The road wound upward over a hill, won't do you a bit of good. Oneida distance away, on an important case, it the beas of sharlow streams and I could see in the far distance, the beas of sharlow at the beas of sharlow at the property of the beas of sharlow at the County is a healthful place, abounds in small towns of picturesque nature, good scenery, and is just the place for you. I self.

door and admitted me.

a good home.

I made myself at home. The first day

not because James wanted it, but be-

As its great limpid eyes tooked at me

am not sending you among strangers, I did nothing but loll around the well because I don't want you to go to a filled library, and smoke his excellent raw, uncut roads leading through hetel. You are living in one now, and it has just about finished you. Now, am to talk all night, or are you willing

The old doctor chatted a while, left a

Now, to tell the truth, there was a good deal of sense in the old man's or-

career for me to feel the Sanquoit range on the south.

the weariness of ex- It did not take long to make arrangeexhaustion. I was ments. I wrote James, telling him the there three days. We sat up late that exhaustion. I was scarcely twenty-five, and had practiced my profession, that of received this answer:

medicine and surgery, for less than three years.

If was robust, full of nervous energy and love for the work I had chosen as my life vocation.

But it happened that in the Spring three wealthy families had given me charge of some very difficult cases in which the lives of well loved members of their families depended upon some rather bold experiments, constant attention, and nerve racking study. Two of these patients, one an elderly man and the other a young lady, had been given

profession, that or medicine and surgers. "My Dear Arnold:

"Your letter could not have come at a less fortunate time as regards making you comfortable, nor a more fortunate one for your purpose of taking a rest. If there is, on the face of the earth, a house where you can find solitude, it is mine at this writing. Emma and the children left me last week for a visit to her father and mother on the farm near Chautauqua Lake. I am so infernally busy that I don't seem to have time to eat or sleep. There are four servants in the house getting fat and lazy with nothing to do. There are five horses in the stable eating their heads off. So, if you can stand the bachelor end of it, and you ought to be able to enjoy a Stagg party, come along and welcome.

"Go in and win. Forget everything bachelor end of it, and you ought to be able to enjoy a Stagg party, come along and welcome." I shall enter into no agreement to pitable, but I assure you I want you

This was just what I wanted, though when school opens.

the town in the basin, for so it looks, fort. It was a cool day, the air was split by blinding flashes of the air was split by blinding flashes of the bank of the diminutive fence, and went inside the church. T was early in my clad heights of Deerfield, Oriskany, and already on the road to perfect health. This became my daily practice.

James came home when I had been had said.

these patients, one an elderly man and many dependence of the strength of the "JAMES STAGG." will not be much before September,

around overhead with a tremendous once been a prosperous mill. Not far and uncomfortable, formed the audito- and the girl screamed. acoustic effect.

By noon the clouds had passed away. the sun was shining grandly, a cool breeze made the day enjoyable, and the water that had fallen in the morning had been eagerly drunk up by the parchea earth.

I could not resist the temptation to ride. I had the bay saddled, got into my riding boots and jacket, and off I

The bay was in great form and spirits. We dashed away to Genesee street, and out, out into the fair country beyond. Somewhere between Utica and Clinton I came across a dimly visible track cutting off through some woods. It was quite a thoroughfare. A farmer passed me on the way to

the city with some truck. "My friend," I said, hailing him, "can you tell me where this road leads?"

"That road don't lead nowhere," he replied promptly. "That is, it don't now. Long time ago that road went to Pawmuc Mill. But they ain't no mill

lightning, and volleys of thunder rolled stream, were the remains of what had

the operatives had dwelt. One or two, evidently more imposing near the little pulpit.

perintendent, or manager. This was the shade of Pawmuc Mills.

I looked at the dwindled stream. pelled the removal of the work to a bang, and stood idly looking around.

be carted from a distance.

I dismounted and roamed about could one appear so suddenly? cutting off through some woods. It was evidently a road that had become overrun with grass and weeds after discontinuance. From the general appearance I judged that once it had been the result to the various elements that went to make up the work-Of course, I knew I could find out all seem like a farmer. ing force.

I wanted to know simply by asking Some strange there was a window opinion. Some strange thought flashed into my mind. A feeling that here, in that quiet these things, these simple little trage- church, I was to be treated to some dies of our qu'et country.

What had caused the drying up of the agined. stream? Why had the site for a mill I leaped through the window, makbeen chosen with so little regard for ing no noise, and landed on the soft future possibilities?

Wearying at last of these questions. and finding that it was growing late, I mounted the bay aga'n and started off to return by another path I saw running in another direction from the old mill.

or to the bay. "We have chanced upon business had I there? the church where Parson Lee holds I dismounted at the churchyard gate,

rium. Two oil lamps hung in brackets at the rear, and two more were placed woman!" came a voice, almost uninaway there were some houses in which rium. Two oil lamps hung in brackets

in other days than their fellows, had At one side, in front, was a small orno doubt been the homes of owner, su- gan. I wondered what rustic beauty me to be two elderly ones and a youngplayed sweet harmony on that.

I opened it and soon found that sweet The tragedy of the play came to me as harmony was a thing impossible for a ones sprang for me, and before I could rustic beauty or any other kind to ex-The less of the water power had commore favored location. Steam power was impracticable in th's out of the way place, where coal would have to be carted from a distance.

"Now youngs uncle!"

The sound of footsteps came clearly to my ears. It was evident that a man had sprung up out of the earth. How else heavy

At one side there was a window open. whisperings of the tragedy I had im-

CHAPTER II. An Astonishing Proposition.

No sooner had I effected my retreat than I regretted it. Had I done right, I asked myself, to go out in that fashion and leave the holy edifice at the caught him fair under the jaw and

Who was the man, that he had business there at that hour? Well, what

The bay was still munching away near forth. Evidently there is a romance or the fence. I was about to go toward tragedy touching the Lees. I wonder if him, when I heard, inside the church, "Beatrice!" he was calling, "Beatrice,

Ah, instead of a tragedy, a romance!

Some rustic lover come to keep a tryst I walked toward the front of the

corner, I heard the patter of a small norse's hoofs. A moment later I saw a little steed dash up to the old gate and a woman dismount. It was by this time too dark for me

she was plain or handsome. I saw, however, that she wore a neat-fitting riding habit, and that she was closely veiled. A sting of something like suspicion pricked me. The man was rough looking, the woman evidently well bred. What could they have in common? mine? If they were lovers, it surely kill you first!"

was not my province to halt her and creature to one of her own standing. Perhaps, I thought, she is a New York girl, or one from some large city, havuntryman. If so, let him thresh his beast. own oats. It was not my duty to look

wondered that neither of them see at all alarmed at sight of the bay, which A wild outburst of savage mirth came certainly argued the presence of a from the three.

stranger in or near the church. a city girl.

"My darling! Oh, my darling!" I heard the man say, and his voice vibrat- man?" ed with some overwhelming emotion. The woman sobbed, the man caressed. 'Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest" Where were the Lees in this affair, any way? And why was I so interest-

steps, my thoughts, my emotion? Heavens! The thunder of horses' In the gloom I saw three riders coming full tilt from the direction of one of the large houses I had noticed.

I could hear loud and angry voices. "An elopement spoiled," I said to myself. "But it's too bad if the man is thrashed."

For a moment I stood irresolute. Then, in the distance, I saw and heard another coming like the wind to overtake the first three,
"It's four to one," I muttered. "I'll

just give the man a little warning." I stepped noiselessly inside the church, Enough light still came in through the windows for me to see clearly. The man stood near the pulpit, the

girl in a half faint in his arms. She was sobbing convulsively and he was rain ing kisses on her lips. I saw that her veil was slightly raised. Her arms were thrown clingingly

around his neck. He supported her in his two strong ones. I coughed With an exclamation of alarm, he al-

most hurled her from him, and made as if to leap from the window. Then he turned and flashed a pistol at my head. "You'll never, never take me," he said

"I don't want to take you, fool!" I answered. "I just came to say that four men are riding like the devil this way and--"Go! go! For God's sake go at once!"

cried the girl. The man, with a swift look towards the door, bent to the upturned lips of his companion.

"My darling! My darling! Sweet guar-They are coming in the gate.

Like an athlete he sprang through the open window and disappeared. The girl swayed as if she were about son Lee.

I loved the blue hills that hem in down along the Mohawk towards Frank- I did not go for my usual ride. By At last an exclamation broke from I looked to see where the bay was, and She put out her hands gropingly as if found him contentedly grazing near the to beg for mercy, or to send me away, I did not know which.

Two rows of wooden benches, hard There was a shoat in the doorway,

telligible, so enraged was the speaker. The men who had entered seemed to

er. The fourth had not yet arrived. The young man and one of the olde tack, they had grasped me in an iron

grip. "Now give it to him!" shouted the younger. "Now give him the lash,

There was a whistling sound, and a heavy whip descended on my shoulders. "Unhand me! What do you mean?" I managed to gasp.

"Ha! I'll show you what I mean!" cried the third man, the one who had wielded the whip. "I'll show you what it is to clope with a Lee! Hang you, you cur! Hang you! Hang you!"

At every curse of the enraged man the whip curled around me. I struggled with all the strength I possessed, but the stings of the whip and the iron grip of the two men made a combination that was too much for me.

"You will rue this!" I cried pantingly. "You will rue this, you bullies! I am not the man you want!"

"Ha! Give it to him again, uncle!" cried the younger man, administering 3 kick on his own account. "How do you like your wedding journey, friend?"

"I'll make it your funeral journey!" I gasped, wrenching my hand free. I knocked him up against the pulpit. That wooden structure never heard the fervent utterances that came from him that minute. He cursed and raved and picked himself up and came for me. Both the older men were on top of me, and I was swaying with them like Atlas with the world on his back.

During the fight the hysterical

curses of the men "Now we've got him!" yelled the young man with an oath, as I fell to the floor. "Kill the wreich! Kill him, do you hear, uncle?"

screams of the girl mingled with the

"No! No! For the sake of Heaven, listen! I don't know that man!" cried the girl, flinging herself on the man who seemed to be the leader of the party, and whom the younger called

to tell how old she was, or whether "You don't know him!" growled the man. "Well, so much the worse. It's bad enough to run off with a man you do know. Crazy fool!" "Let me up! I am not the man you

want!" I said, thoroughly maddened now. "I'll have you all locked up for Yet, again, what business was this of "Hear him! Kill us! Well!"

"Enough of this nonsense! Stand him ask why she preferred such an uncouth up. Let's have a look at the scoundrel." I was jerked to my feet.

The face that came close to mine was swollen and purple with awful rage. ing a flirtation with an impressionable The eyes gleamed like those of a wild "So, you are Tom Firfin, eh? Well,

The woman entered the church, and I "I am not Tom Firfin, you old ass!" I drew back so that she could not see me. yelled. "I am Arnold Stagg, cousin of James Stagg, of Utica.

"Ho! Even so, were it true it would be

Suddenly I heard loud sobbing. Sure- well. But you lie. I've seen your letly this was not the orthodox flirtation of ters, sir. I've seen the whole shameful plot in black and white. You love my niece, eh? Beatrice, do you love this

"No, uncle," sobbed the girl. "I never saw him before.

No name was uttered by either, yet my The man she called uncle was seized mind reverted unaccountably to the with a perfect paroxysm of rage at this. headstone on the monument reading. He left me, and grasping the girl's arm, shook her as a terrier would a rat.

"Don't lie to me, hussy!" he roared. "Don't you think you can wool my eyes ed? Was there a magic influence in that all the time. I know! I know, do you quiet valley that controlled my foot- hear? You have been meeting this man for several nights. You have received letters from him asking you to hoofs beat strong on the grassy road. with him. He is not man enough to come right out and say to me he wants you for a wife. Why? Because, hang him, he may have a dozen wives somewhere else. I know the world a little. miss. I have lived a few years. soon fix this fellow. Stagg, the public prosecutor, eh? Well, he'll be glad to know who claimed relationship. Come along home, now!"

"No!" came a sharp reply like the report of a pistol. "I have no home The girl stood like a queen of tragedy. How I wished it had been lighter so that I could see her face! Her voice sounded

young. "I have no home," she went on. "You are a cruel and merciless tyrant. I am surrounded by spies and traitors. And what have I done? What have I

The ring of truth was in her voice, and yet I had seen her close in the embrace of the man whose well merited thrashing I was taking.

Before the scene could go further, the fourth individual came limping in. Even in the gloom I saw that he wore a semiclerical garb. This, without doubt, was Parson Lee.

"Have you caught them, John? My horse stumbled back here and threw 'Twas enough to make a saint swear, I vow. Well, so they are not far away on their honeymoon, eh?"

The parson, though he had been thrown from his horse, was the calmest of the four. In fact, he was the only

calm person in the church. "Just hold him, John, while I get a light," he went on, limping around to the pulpit. "Too dark to see anything now.

"Let me go, you madmen!" I shouted, struggling again. "Don't let him go, John," said Par-"Strike him if he makes much

Continued on Page Three.



At every curse of the enraged man the whip curled around me.

on my quest.

contented. Each day, if my cousin was at hom we chatted a bit at breakfast, and then father had been one before him. He he would hustle off to work, while I once been a road, was easy of travel yard, and began to read the inscriptions. was therefore born to the profession, would pick out a book from the library, to the sure-footed bay. We soon reached From where I stood I could see the and I am constrained by truth to say have the bay saddled, and ride away. James was a marvel to me. He was nothing of civilization could be seen. made of iron, seemingly. He never felt It seemed to me a long time iron horse. Woods stretched away on I found my cousin's house on Genesee since I had been free from a tired feel- either side. The music of the birds

street with shades down, a somber look ing. of vacancy over everything. But in re-I went over all the well known roads, entered into the spirit of the adventure ply to my ring a servant came to the I clattered into and out of quaint vil- | 200 neighed with pleasure. lages. I poked my way through pleasant James was then in a small town some groves and shady valleys. I rode along ever varying beauty of natural scenery.

prosections, to look up evidence him- heels. For two weeks I led an idle, ideal way toward the Hudson. existence, and grew stronger. Then I began to explore. I found picturesque at that distance, and I

One of these was a fine bay, puchased, bing railroads. As I grew stronger I grew lazy. With ing. honest bay. One morning rain seemed threatening.

cigars. The next day I wandered to the sparsely settled regions. I roamed past peaceful, as it glistened in the sunlight. stables and looked at a couple of new farms that seemed cut off from all asso- It did not seem like the disturbing eleciation with modern progress and throb- ment it was-the bone at which a horde of hungry politicians were always pick-The old doctor chatted a while, left a prescription which I put up myself and never took, and then departed.

| Cause a friend had been pushed for strength, there came no flerce desire to I descended again, and found myself in a valley. In former days a stream of return to work. I wanted to spend all in a valley. In former days a stream of

some one who would be sure to give it my days in those rural scenes with the some size had gone singing and bubbling over the flat slate bottom. But

That which was not a road, having

a stretch of pure country, from which

No hint of a town. No sound of the

thrilled me with delight. Even the bny

Thus we went for miles, through an

perhaps not quite what the doctor had ! I thanked James, of course, and felt ! With a laugh on my lips, I turned the | tracks to the shed in the rear, showing bay's head into the woods and started that Parson Lee still had a congregation, however small. I wandered first to the little grave

> ingly large and prosperous. I wondered at this, and resolved to ask James who lived in that almost unknown

> I did not see the name of Lee on any board or stone. I started, however, when on the costliest, and apparently the newest monument. I read the name

"Mary, beloved wife of Robert For- quietly. rest."
"Forrest!" I mused. "The farmer ribbonlike Mobawk winding its tortuous said something about Bob Forrest as being connected with the Lees. Was a The straighter Erie Canal appeared Lee the murderer of Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest? Was she a Lee caught nothing of its odors. It looked and did Robert kill her? What is the tragedy that lies hidden under this cold,

unspeakable marble?" Of course, murder was the first thing that came into my mind, because James dian of my life!" he murmured. was district attorney. Then I laughed "The window!" I said hurriedly. at the idea of a murder in that peaceful, beautiful spot.

It was growing dusk, but I was in no hurry. I knew it would be a moonlight ders. James Stagg, my cousin, lived in good style in Utica, and I had visited that quiet city two or three times, leaving always with something of regret.

As its great limpid eyes tooked at me from its box stall I experienced a sort of thrill. There was my medicine.

As its great limpid eyes tooked at me from its box stall I experienced a sort of thrill. There was my medicine.

One morning rain seemed threatening. It was a close, hot day, and the murking and this was lost about half the time in some subterranean course it had stolen for itself under the shade.

the world a